



# Introduction of Choice Based Credit System in Higher Education in India: Issues and Concern

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## Abstract:

*Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has been introduced as a major reform in higher education in India. The traditional educational system has many disadvantages like non-uniform course curriculum, low flexibility in choosing subject combinations, low mobility of students among the institutions, time bound manner, non-uniform assessment system and teacher centric approach. The Choice Based Credit System has been adopted following the global standards to provide student autonomy and flexibility in choosing courses, uniform course curriculum and uniform evaluation system, scope for mobility of students to complete their education at different institutions at different times. Emphasis has been given on dissertation, practical classes and tutorials. There is a shift from traditional teacher centric education to student centric approach. This paper analyses different aspects of Choice Based Credit System following the guidelines of UGC and different research papers on this topic. Different issues related to the Minimum Course Curriculum to be followed under this system at Undergraduate level have been discussed. This paper also throws light on the concerns from various corners about the successful implementation of this program.*

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**Keywords:** Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), Higher education

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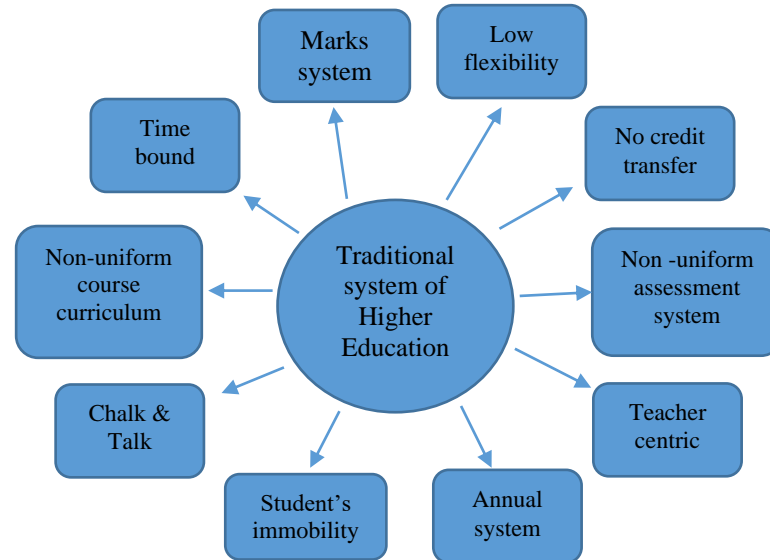
## 1. Introduction

As part of New Education Policy in India, Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has been introduced in the field of higher education. This step has been taken to bring equity, efficiency and academic excellence in national higher education system. In Choice Based Credit System, learner-centric approach has been adopted as a means of education delivery mechanism instead of teacher-centric approach of the traditional higher education system. In the traditional higher education system, marks or percentage based evaluation process has been followed. This obstructs the flexibility of the students to study the subjects or courses of their own choice and their mobility to change the institution of learning. To bring this flexibility in the education system, Choice Based Credit System has been introduced in our country by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This allows the students to choose inter-disciplinary, intra disciplinary and skilled based courses depending upon their interests and scope of employment. CBCS is an internationally acknowledged system in the field of higher education. It offers opportunities and avenues to learn core subjects and also allows to explore additional avenues of learning beyond the core subjects for overall development of an individual and to transform them into human resource.

## 2. Glitches associated with traditional Higher Education system

In the traditional higher education system of our country, the assessment and evaluation procedure are not uniform. The course curriculum is not uniformly distributed. There is fixed time period within which a student has to complete his or her course to get the degree. Students are compelled to accept the combination subjects and compulsory subjects irrespective of their interest. There is no freedom to

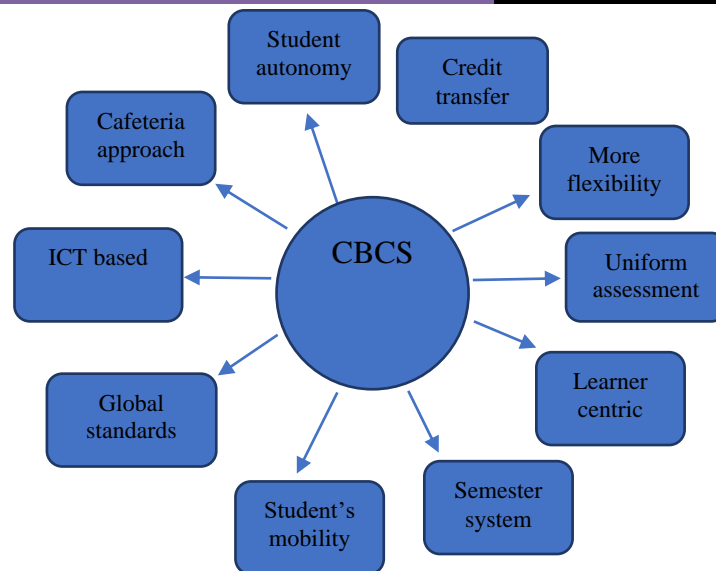
take courses according to their abilities and aptitude. There is no scope or very little scope for the working students to achieve degrees on a part time basis. There is no provision or very little provision to change the institution. In this system, no provision is there to earn credits and transfer the credit. Traditional system of higher education puts pressure on the student. Further, it is not focused on student- centric approach. There is little flexibility and little choice of courses by the students to meet their needs and long term goals. Traditional higher education system is highly rigid and compartmentalized.



### 3. Basic Features of Choice Based Credit System

As per UGC guidelines, the basic features of CBCS are summarised as follows:

1. Shift in focus from the teacher-centric to student-centric education.
2. Opportunity for the students to choose courses from the prescribed courses comprising core, elective or skill-based courses.
3. CBCS allows students to choose inter disciplinary, intra disciplinary and skilled oriented papers even from other disciplines according to their learning needs, interests and aptitudes.
4. Evaluation of the courses following the grading system instead of conventional marks system.
5. Uniform grading system has been followed in CBCS in the entire higher education.
6. Students can move across the institutions within India to complete the course.
7. CBCS offers flexibility for the students to study at different times and at different institutions to complete one course.
8. Credits earned at one institution can be transferred to another institution of choice.
9. Uniform grading system will enable potential employers in assessing the performance of the candidates.
10. To bring uniformity in evaluation system SGPA/CGPA has been introduced based on the performance in examinations.
11. Examination pattern will follow the semester system.
12. CBCS makes education broad based and at per with global standards.
13. One can take credits by combining unique combinations, for example, physics with economics; microbiology with chemistry or environmental science etc.
14. Workload of teacher may fluctuate in CBCS system.
15. This system demands good infrastructure and use of ICT for dissemination of education.



#### 4. Objectives of introducing CBCS

The main objectives of introducing CBCS in higher education by UGC are-

1. Need for reforms in higher education,
2. Enhanced learning opportunities,
3. Ability to match learners scholastic needs and aspirations,
4. Inter-university mobility of learners,
5. Enhancement of quality of education and excellence,
6. Greater flexibility to complete the course,
7. Uniformity in standardization of educational programmes across the country.
8. Comparability of educational programmes at global level.

#### 5. Course curriculum under CBCS

The course curriculum has been designed as three tier structure under CBCS. These are:

1. Hard core papers- these papers are decided by the parent department as compulsory papers for the learners aspiring for a degree in that discipline.
2. Soft core papers- these papers are inter-disciplinary and application oriented. Students have the option to choose from the list of soft core papers. These papers are decided by both parent department as well as other allied departments.
3. Optional papers- these are the papers that the learners opt to choose according to their own preference from the parent department as well as from other departments.

For the holistic development of all the learners, courses like value education, women studies and personality development are also incorporated in the curriculum.

#### 6. UGC guideline for minimum course curriculum for undergraduate courses under CBCS:

As described in UGC guideline for minimum course curriculum for undergraduate courses under CBCS, the outline of CBCS is given as;

1. Core Course: A course, which should compulsorily be studied by a candidate as a core requirement is termed as a core course.
2. Elective Course: Generally a course which can be chosen from a pool of courses and which may be very specific or specialized or advanced or supportive to the discipline/subject of study or which provides an extended scope or which enables an exposure to some other discipline/subject/domain or nurtures the candidate's proficiency/skill is called an elective course
3. Elective courses may be of following types-

A. Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) Course: Elective courses may be offered by the main discipline/subject of study is referred to as Discipline Specific Elective. The University/Institute may also offer discipline related Elective courses of interdisciplinary nature

B. Dissertation/Project: An Elective course designed to acquire special/advanced knowledge, such as supplement study/support study to a project work, and a candidate study such a course on his own with an advisory support by a teacher/faculty member is called dissertation/project.

C. Generic Elective Course: An elective course chosen generally from an unrelated discipline/subject, with an intention to seek exposure is called a Generic Elective.

A core course offered in a discipline/subject may be treated as an elective by other discipline/subject and vice versa and such electives may also be referred to as Generic Elective.

1. Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC): These courses are designed to enhance the ability and skill of the students. These courses may be of two kinds-

A. Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC): These courses are based upon the content that leads to knowledge enhancement like Environmental Science and English Communication.

B. Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC): These courses may be chosen from a pool of courses designed to provide value-based and/or skill-based knowledge

Choice Based Credit System introduces Research Component in Under-Graduate Courses. Project work/Dissertation is considered as a special course involving application of knowledge in solving/analysing/exploring real life situation/difficult problem. A Project/Dissertation work would be of 6 credits. A Project/Dissertation work may be given in lieu of a discipline specific elective paper.

### **7. Implementation of CBCS at Under Graduate level:**

The Central/ State University may implement CBCS subject to the condition that all the stakeholders agree to follow common minimum curriculum as fixed by the UGC.

1. The Universities may design their own syllabi for the core and elective papers subject to the deviation from the UGC fixed syllabi being 20% at the maximum.
2. As per the facilities available Universities may add further to the list of elective papers prepared by UGC.
3. All Universities should follow same number of core papers for both UG Honours as well as UG programme.
4. The University/Institute may plan the number of seats per elective paper as per the facility and infrastructure available.
5. An Undergraduate degree with honours in a discipline may be awarded if a student completes 14 core papers in that discipline, 2 Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses, 2 Skill Enhancement Courses, 4 papers each from a list of Discipline Specific Elective and Generic Elective paper respectively.
6. An Undergraduate degree in Science discipline may be awarded if a student completes 4 core papers each in three disciplines of choice, 2 Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses, 4 Skill Enhancement Courses, 2 papers each from a list of Discipline Specific Elective papers based on three disciplines of choice.
7. An Undergraduate degree in Humanities/Social Science/Commerce discipline may be awarded if a student completes 4 core papers each in two disciplines of choice, 2 core papers each in English and MIL respectively, 2 Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses, 4 Skill Enhancement Courses, 2 papers each from a list of Discipline Specific Elective papers based on two disciplines of choice and two papers from the list of Generic Elective Papers.
8. A student can opt for more number of Elective and AE Elective papers than proposed under the model curriculum of UGC. However the total credit score earned will not exceed 160 credits for UG Honours and 140 credits for UG degree.
9. Obtaining 24 credits in the concerned discipline at the undergraduate level may be deemed sufficient to satisfy their requirement for admission to the M.A/M.Sc./Technical/Professional course.
10. The Institute should evolve a system/policy about extra-curricular activities/General interest/Hobby/Sports/NCC/NSS/related courses on its own.
11. Grades and Grade Points will be given under SGPA/CGPA as follows:

Letter Grade	Grade Point
O (Outstanding)	10
A+ (Excellent)	9
A (Very Good)	8
B+ (Good)	7
B (Above Average)	6
C (Average)	5
P (Pass)	4
F (Fail)	0
Ab (Absent)	0

### 8. Criticism of Choice Based Credit System:

In spite of having many advantages this system has been criticized from different corners for the following reasons-

1. It would be challenging to maintain compatibility among the core subject papers and soft papers.
2. Simultaneous offering of more than one programme of different nature would be highly challenging.
3. The Academic institutions will have to bear extra burden as CBCS has the flexibility in taking or choosing credits.
4. Due to CBCS work load of teachers would be increased. This may generate stress in faculty members and high quality teaching may be hampered.
5. It would be highly challenging to maintain mobility or transferring of students from one institution to another.
6. Full liberty for choices of students may lead to problem of indiscipline and it would hamper mastery over a specific subject.
7. Little deviation in syllabus and Elective Papers based on the facilities available (allowed upto maximum of 20%) may force problem in maintaining equality in terms of mobility of students.
8. As much weightage has been given on continuous internal assessment and evaluation students will not prepare themselves seriously for examinations.
9. Most of the time teachers will be engaged in setting different types of question papers for continuous assessment. This may hamper regular teaching
10. Research work has been given importance but many institutions do not have proper research facilities. The quality of research will be compromised.
11. Increased class size in most of the colleges would be the major hurdle for successful implementation of CBCS.
12. This system will result in less teaching hours as most of the time will be spent on evaluation.
13. Lack of storage space in most institutions for maintaining the projects/assignments and other records of each student.
14. In CBCS, work load of the institutions will be increased but large number of unfilled vacancy in both teaching and non-teaching category and understaff condition in educational institutions will be the major hindrance in implementing CBCS.

A study was conducted by Kelkar and Ravishankar (2014) involving faculty members from colleges affiliated to Mumbai University<sup>1</sup> and published in Current Science. Teachers from different colleges affiliated to Mumbai University responded to the questionnaire related to whether the objectives of CBCS have been achieved in their colleges. It was found that 42% of the teachers agreed that the objectives were achieved. 39% felt that they were not met and 18% were uncertain. The results are shown in following diagram-

### 9. Conclusion

Initiatives have been taken by Ministry of HRD to bring major reforms in higher education in India. In this globalized world, it is very essential to maintain equality, flexibility and mobility in the higher

<sup>1</sup>Mumbai University made CBCS compulsory in 2011.

education sector. Definitely, learning by earning credits and transfer of credits have many advantages. Education should also be student centric as proposed in Choice Based Credit System. This system may help students to meet their needs and aspirations and to achieve the skills for employment according to their choice. Student autonomy, Common Syllabi and Uniform evaluation system are the main features of Choice Based Credit System. India is a large country with high diversity in higher education in terms of courses and streams according to the facilities available at local level. This makes the higher education scenario in India very complex. Maintaining harmony among the different courses and streams throughout the country would be a highly challenging task. There are infrastructural and human resource deficiencies also. It would be unwise to forcefully introduce the system in a hurry all over the country. This can be introduced first where good infrastructural and other facilities are available. The impact of the system should be carefully studied and necessary modifications in the policy may be incorporated. There is also need for survey, debate, seminar and conferences on CBCS for its successful implementation and to achieve the global standards in higher education in India.

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